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ABRAHAM LINCOLN,

AN ADDRESS BY

WILLIAM McKINLEY,

OF OHIO,

BEFORE THE MARQUETTE CLUB,

CHICAGO,

FEBRUARY 12, 1896.



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*Mr. President, Gentlemen of the Marquette Club, and My  
Fellow Citizens:*

It requires the most gracious pages in the world's history to record what one American achieved. The story of this simple life is the story of a plain, honest, manly citizen, true patriot, and profound statesman, who believing with all the strength of his mighty soul in the institutions of his country, won because of them the highest place in its government—then fell a precious sacrifice to the Union he held so dear, which Providence had spared his life long enough to save.

We meet to-night to do honor to this immortal hero, Abraham Lincoln, whose achievements have heightened human aspirations and broadened the field of opportunity to the races of men. While the party with which we stand, and for which he stood, can justly claim him, and without dispute can boast the distinction of being the first to honor and trust him, his fame has leaped the bounds of party and country, and now belongs to mankind and the ages.

What were the traits of character which made Abraham Lincoln prophet and master, without a rival, in the greatest crisis in our history? What gave him such mighty power?

To me the answer is simple : Lincoln had sublime faith in the people. He walked with and among them. He recognized the importance and power of an enlightened public sentiment and was guided by it. Even amid the vicissitudes of war, he concealed little from public review and inspection. In all he did, he invited, rather than evaded, examination and criticism. He submitted his plans and purposes, as far as practicable, to public consideration with perfect frankness and sincerity. There was such homely simplicity in his character that it could not be hedged in by the pomp of place, nor the ceremonials of high official station. He was so accessible to the public that he seemed to take the whole people into his confidence. Here, perhaps, was one secret of his power. The people never lost their confidence in him, however much they unconsciously added to his personal discomfort and trials. His patience was almost superhuman; and who will say that he was mistaken in his treatment of the thousands who thronged continually about him? More than once when reproached for permitting visitors to crowd upon him, he asked, in pained surprise: "Why, what harm does this confidence in men do me? I get only good and inspiration from it."

Horace Greeley once said: "I doubt whether man, woman or child, white or black, bond or free, virtuous or vicious, ever accosted, or reached forth a hand to Abraham Lincoln, and detected in his countenance or manner, any repugnance or shrinking from the proffered contact, any assumption of superiority, or betrayal of disdain."

Frederick Douglass, the orator and patriot, is credited with saying: "Mr. Lincoln is the only white man with whom I have ever talked, or in whose presence I have ever been, who did not consciously or unconsciously betray to me that he recognized my color."

George Bancroft, the historian, alluding to this characteristic, which was never so conspicuously manifested as during the darker hours of the war, beautifully illustrated it in these memorable words: "As a child, in a dark night,

on a rugged way, catches hold of the hand of its father for guidance and support, Lincoln clung fast to the hand of the people, and moved calmly through the gloom."

His earliest public utterances were marked by this confidence. On March 9, 1832, when announcing himself as a candidate for Representative in the Illinois Legislature, he said that he felt it his duty to make known to the people his sentiments upon the questions of the day :

"Every man is said to have his peculiar ambition," he observed, "and whether it be true or not, I can say, for one, that I have no other so great as that of being truly esteemed by my fellow men by rendering myself worthy of their esteem. How far I shall succeed in gratifying this ambition is yet to be developed. I am young and unknown to many of you. I was born, and have ever remained, in the humblest walks of life. I have no wealthy or popular relatives or friends to recommend me. My case is thrown exclusively upon the independent voters of the county. \* \* \* But if the good people, in their wisdom, shall see fit to keep me in the background, I have been too familiar with disappointments to be very much chagrined."

In this remarkable address—to me always pathetic—made when he was only twenty-three, the main elements of Lincoln's character and the qualities which made his great career possible are revealed with startling distinctness. It expresses the experience of the noble young man of to-day equally as well as then. We see therein "that brave old wisdom of sincerity," that oneness in feeling with the common people, and that supreme confidence in them, which formed the foundation of his political faith.

Among the statesmen of America, Lincoln is the true democrat; and, Franklin perhaps excepted, the first great one. He had no illustrious ancestry, no inherited place or wealth, and none of the prestige, power, training, or culture which were assured to the gentry or landed classes of our own Colonial times. Nor did Lincoln believe that these classes, respectable and patriotic however they might be, should, as a matter of abstract right, have the controlling influence in our government. Instead, he believed in the all-pervading power of public opinion.

Lincoln had little or no instruction in the common school; but, as the eminent Dr. Cuyler has said, he was graduated from "the grand college of free labor, whose works were the flat-boat, the farm, and the backwoods lawyer's office." He had a broad comprehension of the central idea of popular government. The Declaration of Independence was his hand-book; time and again he expressed his belief in freedom and equality. On July 1, 1854, he wrote:

"Most governments have been based, practically, on the denial of the equal rights of men. Ours began by affirming those rights. They said 'some men are too ignorant and vicious to share in government.' 'Possibly so,' said we, 'and by your system you would always keep them ignorant and vicious. We proposed to give all a chance; and we expected the weak to grow stronger, the ignorant wiser, and all better and happier together.' We made the experiment, and the fruit is before us. Look at it, think of it! Look at it in its aggregate grandeur, extent of country, and numbers of population."

Lincoln believed in the uplifting influences of free government, and that by giving all a chance we could get higher average results for the people than where governments are exclusive and opportunities are limited to the few. No American ever did so much as he to enlarge these opportunities, or tear down the barriers which excluded a free participation in them. In his first message to Congress, at the special session convening on July 4, 1861, he gave signal evidence of his faith in our institutions, and their elevating influences, in most impressive language. He said:

"It may be affirmed without extravagance that the free institutions we enjoy have developed the powers and improved the condition of our whole people beyond any example in the world. Of this we now have a striking and an impressive illustration. So large an army as the Government has now on foot was never before known without a soldier in it but who has taken his place there of his own free choice." [Then what followed in his message is, to me, the highest and most touching tribute ever spoken or written of our matchless Volunteer Army of 1861-'65 by any American statesman, soldier, or citizen from that day to this:] "But more than this, there are many single regiments whose members, one and another, possess full practical knowledge of all the arts, sciences, and professions, and whatever else, whether useful or elegant, is known in



the world; and there is scarcely one from which there could not be selected a President, a Cabinet, a Congress, and perhaps a Court, abundantly competent to administer the Government itself."

What a noble, self-sacrificing army of freemen he describes! The like of it mankind never saw before and will not look upon soon again. Their service and sacrifice were not in vain—the Union is stronger, freer and better than ever before because they lived, and the peace, fraternity and harmony, which Lincoln prayed might come, and which he prophesied would come, is happily here. And now that the wounds of the war are healed, may we not, to-night, with grateful hearts, resolve, in the words of Lincoln, that we will "care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan."

Lincoln's antecedent life seems to have been one of unconscious preparation for the great responsibilities which were committed to him in 1860. As one of the masses himself, and living with them, sharing their feelings, and sympathizing with their daily trials, their hopes and aspirations, he was better fitted to lead them than any other man of his age. He recognized more clearly than any one else that the plain people he met in his daily life, and knew so familiarly, were, according to the dictates of justice and our theory of government, its ultimate rulers and the arbiters of its destiny. He knew this not as a theory, but from his own personal experience.

Born in poverty, and surrounded by obstacles on every hand seemingly insurmountable but for the intervening hand of Providence, Lincoln grew every year into greater and grander intellectual power and vigor. His life, until he was twelve years old, was spent either in a "half-faced camp" or cabin. Yet amid such surroundings the boy learned to read, write, and cipher, to think, declaim, and speak, in a manner far beyond his years and time. All his days in the school house "added together would not make a single year." But every day of his life from infancy to manhood was a constant drill in the school of nature and experience. His study of books and newspapers was beyond that of any other person

in his town or neighborhood, and perhaps of his county or section. He did not read many books, but he learned more from them than any other reader. It was strength of body as well as of mind that made Lincoln's career possible. Ill success only spurred him into making himself more worthy of trust and confidence. Nothing could daunt him. He might have but a single tow-linen shirt, or only one pair of jeans pantaloons, he often did not know where his next dollar was to come from, but he mastered English grammar and composition, arithmetic, geometry, surveying, logic, and the law.

How well he mastered the art of expression, is shown by the incident of the Yale professor who heard his Cooper Institute speech and called on him at his hotel, to inquire where he had learned his matchless power as a public speaker. The modest country lawyer was in turn surprised to be suspected of possessing unusual talents as an orator, and could only answer that his sole training had been in the school of experience.

Eight years' service in the Illinois Legislature, two years in Congress and nearly thirty years political campaigning, in the most exciting period of American politics, gave scope for the development of his powers, and that tact, readiness, and self-reliance, which were invaluable to a modest, backward man, such as Lincoln naturally was. Added to these qualities, he had the genius, which communizes, which puts a man on a level, not only with the highest, but with the lowest of his kind. By dint of patient industry, and by using wisely his limited opportunities, he became the most popular orator, the best political manager, and the ablest leader of his party in Illinois.

But the best training he had for the Presidency, after all, was his twenty-three years' arduous experience as a lawyer traveling the circuit of the courts of his district and State. Here he met in forensic contests, and frequently defeated some of the most powerful legal minds of the West. In the higher courts he won still greater distinction in the important cases committed to his charge.



With this preparation, it is not surprising that Lincoln entered upon the Presidency peculiarly well equipped for its vast responsibilities. His contemporaries, however, did not realize this. The leading statesmen of the country were not prepossessed in his favor. They appear to have had no conception of the remarkable powers latent beneath that uncouth and rugged exterior. It seemed to them strangely out of place that the people should at this, the greatest crisis of their history, entrust the supreme executive power of the Nation to one whom they presumptuously called "this ignorant rail-splitter from the prairies of Illinois." Many predicted failure from the beginning.

Lincoln was essentially a man of peace. He inherited from his Quaker forefathers an intense opposition to war. During his brief service in Congress he found occasion more than once to express it. He opposed the Mexican war from principle but voted men and supplies after hostilities actually began. In one of his few speeches in the House, he characterized military glory as "that rainbow that rises in showers of blood—that serpent that charms but to destroy." When he became responsible for the welfare of the country, he was none the less earnest for peace. He felt that even in the most righteous cause, war is a fearful thing, and he was actuated by the feeling that it ought not to be begun except as a last resort, and then only after it had been precipitated by the enemies of the country. He said in Philadelphia, on February 22, 1861:

"There is no need of bloodshed and war. There is no necessity for it. I am not in favor of such a course; and I may say in advance that there will be no bloodshed unless it is forced upon the Government. The Government will not use force unless force is used against it."

In the selection of his Cabinet, he at once showed his greatness and magnanimity. His principal rivals for the Presidential nomination were invited to seats in his council chamber. No one but a great man, conscious of his own strength, would have done this. It was soon perceived that his greatness was in no sense obscured by the presence of

the distinguished men who sat about him. The most gifted statesmen of the country: Seward, Chase, Cameron, Stanton, Blair, Bates, Welles, Fessenden, and Dennison, some of whom had been leaders in the Senate of the United States, composed that historic Cabinet, and the man who had been sneered at as "the rail-splitter" suffered nothing by such association and comparison. He was a leader in fact as well as name.

Magnanimity was one of Lincoln's most striking traits. Patriotism moved him at every step. At the beginning of the war he placed at the head of three most important military departments three of his political opponents—Patterson, Butler and McClellan. He did not propose to make it a partisan war. He sought by every means in his power to enlist all who were patriots.

In his message of July 4, 1861, he stated his purpose in these words:

"I desire to preserve the Government that it may be administered for all, as it was administered by the men who made it. On the side of the Union it is a struggle to maintain in the world that form and substance of Government whose leading object is to elevate the condition of men, lift artificial burdens from all shoulders and clear the paths of laudable pursuits for all, to afford all an unfettered start and a fair chance in the race of life. This is the leading object of the Government for whose existence we contend."

Many people were impatient at Lincoln's conservatism. He gave the South every chance possible. He pleaded with them with an earnestness that was pathetic. He recognized that the South was not alone to blame for the existence of slavery, but that the sin was a National one. He sought to impress upon the South that he would not use his office as President to take away from them any constitutional right, great or small.

In his first inaugural he addressed the men of the South, as well as the North, as his "countrymen," one and all, and with an outburst of indescribable tenderness, exclaimed: "We are not enemies, but friends. We must not be enemies." And then in those wondrously sweet and touching words which even yet thrill the heart, he said:

"Though passion may have strained, it must not break our bonds of affection. The mystic chords of memory, stretching from every battle-field and patriot grave to every living heart and hearthstone all over this broad land, will yet swell the chorus of the Union when again touched, as surely they will be, by the better angels of our nature."

But his words were unheeded. The mighty war came with its dreadful train. Knowing no wrong, he dreaded no evil for himself. He had done all he could to save the country by peaceful means. He had entreated and expostulated, now he would do and dare. He had in words of solemn import warned the men of the South. He had appealed to their patriotism by the sacred memories of the battle-fields of the Revolution, on which the patriot blood of their ancestors had been so bravely shed, not to break up the Union. Yet all in vain. "Both parties deprecated war; but one would make war rather than let the Nation survive; and the other would accept war rather than let it perish. And the war came."

Lincoln did all he could to avert it, but there was no hesitation on his part when the sword of rebellion flashed from its scabbard. He was from that moment until the close of his life unceasingly devoted and consecrated to the great purpose of saving the Union. All other matters he regarded as trivial, and every movement, of whatever character, whether important or unimportant of itself, was bent to that end.

The world now regards with wonder the infinite patience, gentleness and kindness, with which he bore the terrible burdens of that four years' struggle. Humane, forgiving and long-suffering himself, he was always especially tender and considerate of the poor, and in his treatment of them was full of those "kind little acts which are of the same blood as great and holy deeds." As Charles Sumner so well said: "With him as President, the idea of republican institutions, where no place is too high for the humblest, was perpetually manifest, so that his simple presence was a proclamation of the equality of all men."

During the whole of the struggle, he was a tower of strength to the Union. Whether in defeat or victory, he

kept right on, dismayed at nothing, and never to be diverted from the pathway of duty. Always cool and determined, all learned to gain renewed courage, calmness and wisdom from him, and to lean upon his strong arm for support. The proud designation, "Father of His Country," was not more appropriately bestowed upon Washington, than the affectionate title "Father Abraham" was given to Lincoln by the soldiers and loyal people of the North.

The crowning glory of Lincoln's administration, and the greatest executive act in American history, was his immortal Proclamation of Emancipation. Perhaps more clearly than anyone else Lincoln had realized years before he was called to the Presidency, that the country could not continue half slave and half free. He declared it before Seward proclaimed the "irrepressible conflict." The contest between freedom and slavery was inevitable; it was written in the stars. The Nation must be either all slave, or all free. Lincoln with almost supernatural prescience foresaw it. His prophetic vision is manifested through all his utterances, notably in the great debate between himself and Douglas. To him was given the duty and responsibility of making that great classic of liberty, the Declaration of Independence, no longer an empty promise, but a glorious fulfillment.

Many long and thorny steps were to be taken before this great act of justice could be performed. Patience and forbearance had to be exercised. It had to be demonstrated that the Union could be saved in no other way. Lincoln, much as he abhorred slavery, felt that his chief duty was to save the Union, under the Constitution, and within the Constitution. He did not assume the duties of his great office with the purpose of abolishing slavery, nor changing the Constitution, but as a servant of the Constitution and the laws of the country then existing. In a speech delivered in Ohio, in 1859, he said: "The people of the United States are the rightful masters of both Congress and the Courts—not to overthrow the Constitution, but to overthrow the men who would overthrow the Constitution."



This was the principle which governed him, and which he applied in his official conduct when he reached the Presidency. We now know that he had emancipation constantly in his mind's eye for nearly two years after his first inauguration. It is true he said at the start, "I believe I have no lawful right to interfere with slavery where it now exists, and have no intention of doing so;" and that the public had little reason to think he was meditating general emancipation until he issued his preliminary proclamation, September 22, 1862.

Just a month before, exactly, he had written to the editor of the New York Tribune :

"My paramount object is to save the Union, and not either to save or destroy slavery. If I could save the Union without freeing any slave, I would do it; if I could save it by freeing all the slaves, I would do it; and if I could do it by freeing some and leaving others alone, I would also do that."

The difference in his thought and purpose about "the divine institution" is very apparent in these two expressions. Both were made in absolute honor and sincerity. Public sentiment had undergone a great change, and Lincoln, valiant defender of the Constitution that he was, and faithful tribune of the people that he always was, changed with the people. The war had brought them and him to a nearer realization of our absolute dependence upon a Higher Power, and had quickened his conceptions of duty more acutely than the public could realize. The purposes of God, working through the ages, were perhaps more clearly revealed to him than to any other.

Besides, it was as he himself once said : "It is a quality of revolutions not to go by old lines or old laws, but to break up both and make new ones." He was "naturally anti-slavery," and the determination he formed when as a young man he witnessed an auction in the slave shambles of New Orleans, never forsook him. It is recorded how his soul burned with indignation, and that he then exclaimed, "If I ever get a chance to hit that thing, I'll hit it hard." He "hit it hard" when as a member of the Illinois Legislature he pro-



tested that "the institution of slavery is founded on both injustice and bad policy." He "hit it hard" when as a member of Congress he "voted for the Wilmot Proviso as good as forty times." He "hit it hard" when he stumped his state against the Kansas-Nebraska bill, and on the direct issue carried Illinois in favor of the restriction of slavery by a majority of 4,414 votes. He "hit it hard" when he approved the law abolishing slavery in the District of Columbia, an anti-slavery measure that he had voted for in Congress. He "hit it hard" when he signed the acts abolishing slavery in all the Territories, and for the repeal of the Fugitive Slave Law. But it still remained for him to strike slavery its death-blow. He did that in his glorious Proclamation of Freedom.

It was in this light that Lincoln himself viewed these great events. He wrote a mass-meeting of unconditional Union men at Springfield, Ill., August 26, 1863, as follows:

"The emancipation policy and the use of colored troops constitute the heaviest blow yet dealt to the Rebellion, and at least one of these important successes could not have been achieved when it was but for the aid of black soldiers. \* \* \* \* The job was a great National one, and let none be banned who bore an honorable part in it. \* \* \* Peace does not appear so distant as it did. I hope it will come soon, and come to stay; and so come as to be worth the keeping in all future time. It will then have proved that among free men there can be no successful appeal from the ballot to the bullet, and that they who take such appeal are sure to lose their case and pay the cost. And then there will be some black men who can remember that with silent tongue, and clenched teeth, and steady eye, and well-poised bayonet, they have helped mankind on to this great consummation, while I fear there will be some white ones unable to forget that with malignant heart and deceitful speech they strove to hinder it."

Secretary Seward tells how when he carried the historic Proclamation to the President for signature at noon on the first day of January, 1863, he said: "I have been shaking hands since nine o'clock this morning, and my right hand is almost paralyzed. If my name ever goes into history, it will be for this act, and my whole soul is in it. If my hand trembles when I sign the Proclamation all who examine the

document hereafter, will say, 'he hesitated.'" He turned to the table, took up his pen and slowly, firmly wrote that '*Abraham Lincoln*' with which the whole world is now familiar. Then he looked up and said: "That will do."

In all the long years of slavery agitation, unlike any of the other anti-slavery leaders, Lincoln always carried the people with him. In 1854 Illinois cast loose from her old Democratic moorings and followed his leadership in a most emphatic protest against the repeal of the Missouri Compromise. In 1858 the people of Illinois endorsed his opposition to the aggressions of slavery, in a state usually Democratic, even against so popular a leader as "the Little Giant." In 1860 the whole country endorsed his position on slavery, even when the people were continually harangued that his election meant the dissolution of the Union. During the war the people advanced with him step by step to its final overthrow. Indeed, in the election of 1864 the people not only endorsed emancipation, but went far towards recognizing the political equality of the negro. They heartily justified the President in having enlisted colored soldiers to fight side by side with the white man in the noble cause of union and liberty. Aye, they did more, they endorsed his position on another and vastly more important phase of the race problem. They approved his course as President in reorganizing the government of Louisiana, and a hostile press did not fail to call attention to the fact that this meant eventually negro suffrage in that state.

Perhaps, however, it was not known then that Lincoln had written the new Free State Governor, on March 13, 1864, as follows:

"Now you are about to have a Convention, which, among other things, will probably define the elective franchise. I barely suggest for your private consideration, whether some of the colored people may not be let in—as for instance, the very intelligent, and especially those who have fought gallantly in our ranks. They would probably help, in some trying time to come, to keep the jewel of liberty within the family of freedom."

Lincoln had that happy, peculiar habit, which few public men have attained, of looking away from the deceptive and

misleading influences about him, and none are more deceptive than those of public life in our capitals, straight into the hearts of the people. He could not be deceived by the self-interested host of eager counselors who sought to enforce their own particular views upon him as the voice of the country. He chose to determine for himself what the people were thinking about and wanting him to do, and no man ever lived who was a more accurate judge of their opinions and wishes.

The battle of Gettysburg turned the scale of the war in favor of the Union, and it has always seemed to me most fortunate that Lincoln declared for emancipation before rather than after that decisive contest. A later Proclamation might have been construed as a tame and cowardly performance, not a challenge of Truth to Error for mortal combat. The ground on which that battle was fought is held sacred by every friend of freedom. But important as the battle itself was the dedication of it as a National Cemetery is celebrated for a grander thing. The words Lincoln spoke there will live "until time shall be no more," through all eternity. Well may they be forever preserved on tablets of bronze upon the spot where he spoke, but how infinitely better it would be if they could find a permanent lodging place in the soul of every American!

Lincoln was a man of moderation. He was neither an autocrat nor a tyrant. If he moved slowly sometimes, it was because it was better to move slowly, and, like the successful general that he was, he was only waiting for his reserves to come up. Possessing almost unlimited power, he yet carried himself like one of the humblest of men. He weighed every subject. He considered and reflected upon every phase of public duty. He got the average judgment of the plain people. He had a high sense of justice, a clear understanding of the rights of others, and never needlessly inflicted an injury upon any man.

He said, in response to a serenade, November 10, 1864, just after his triumphal election for a second term to the great office of President:

"Now that the election is over, may not all having a common interest reunite in a common effort to save our common country? For my own part, I have striven and shall strive to avoid placing any obstacle in the way. So long as I have been here I have not willingly planted a thorn in any man's bosom. While I am deeply sensible to the high compliment of a re-election, and duly grateful, as I trust; to Almighty God for having directed my countrymen to a right conclusion, as I think, for their own good, it adds nothing to my satisfaction that any other man may be disappointed or pained by the result."

It is pleasant to note that in the very last public speech by President Lincoln, on April 11, 1865, he uttered noble sentiments of charity and good-will similar to those of his sublime second inaugural, which were of peculiar interest to the people of the South. In discussing the question of reconstruction, he said :

"We all agree that the seceded States, so called, are out of their proper practical relation with the Union, and that the sole object of the government, civil and military, in regard to those States, is to again get them into that proper practical relation. 'I believe that it is not only possible, but in fact easier, to do this without deciding or even considering whether these States have ever been out of the Union, than with it. Finding themselves safely at home, it would be utterly immaterial whether they had ever been abroad. Let us all join in doing the acts necessary to restoring the proper practical relations between these States and the Union, and each forever after innocently indulge his own opinion whether in doing the acts he brought the States from without into the Union, or only gave them proper assistance, they never having been out of it.'"

Mr. President, it is not difficult to place a correct estimate upon the character of Lincoln. He was the greatest man of his time, especially approved of God for the work He gave him to do. History abundantly proves his superiority as a leader, and establishes his constant reliance upon a Higher Power for guidance and support. The tendency of this age is to exaggeration, but of Lincoln certainly none have spoken more highly than those who knew him best.

A distinguished orator\* of to-day has said: "Lincoln surpassed all orators in eloquence; all diplomatists in wisdom; all statesmen in foresight; and the most ambitious in fame."

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\*Hon. John J. Ingalls of Kansas.



This is in accord with the estimate of Stanton who pronounced him "the most perfect ruler of men the world had ever seen."

Seward, too, declared Lincoln "a man of destiny, with character made and molded by Divine Power to save a nation from perdition."

Oliver Wendell Holmes characterized him as "the true representative of this continent; an entirely public man; father of his country; the pulse of twenty millions throbbing in his heart, the thought of their minds articulated by his tongue."

Bancroft wisely observed: "Lincoln thought always of mankind, as well as his own country, and served human nature itself; he finished a work which all time cannot overthrow."

Sumner said that in Lincoln "the West spoke to the East, pleading for human rights, as declared by our fathers."

Horace Greeley, in speaking of the events which led up to and embraced the Rebellion, declared: "Other men were helpful, and nobly did their part; yet, looking back through the lifting mists of those seven eventful, tragic, trying, glorious years, I clearly discern the one providential leader, the indispensable hero of the great drama, Abraham Lincoln."

James Russell Lowell was quick to perceive and proclaim Lincoln's greatness. In December, 1863, in a review of the "President's Policy," in the Atlantic Monthly, he said: "Perhaps none of our Presidents since Washington has stood so firm in the confidence of the people as Lincoln, after three years' stormy administration. \* \* \* \* \*

A profound common sense is the best genius for statesmanship. Hitherto the wisdom of the President's measures has been justified by the fact that they always resulted in more firmly uniting public opinion."

Lincoln is certainly the most sagacious and far-seeing statesman in the annals of American history. His entire public life justifies this estimate of him. It is notable that his stand upon all public questions in his earlier as well as



his later career stamp him as the wisest exponent of political truths we have ever had.

Witnessing the Government as we do to-day, with its debt-increasing, bond-issuing, gold-depleting, labor-destroying, low-tariff policy, with what mighty force the words of Lincoln, written more than half a century ago, come to us in this hour and emergency! They read as if written for the living present, not for the forgotten past. Why, do you know, that as far back as March 1, 1843, at a Whig meeting in Springfield, Mr. Lincoln offered a series of resolutions relating to the tariff, which could well be accepted here to-night? They were then instantly and unanimously adopted, and Mr. Lincoln was himself appointed to prepare an "Address to the People of the State" upon the subjects which they embraced. Let me read from this Address his profound observations upon tariff and taxation and their relation to the condition of the country.

"The first of our resolutions" said Mr. Lincoln, "declares a tariff of duties upon foreign importations, producing sufficient revenue for the support of the General Government, and so adjusted as to protect American industry, to be indispensably necessary to the prosperity of the American people; and the second declares direct taxation for a National revenue to be improper.

"For several years past the revenues of the Government have been unequal to its expenditures, and consequently loan after loan, sometimes direct and sometimes indirect in form, has been resorted to. By this means a new national debt has been created, and is still growing on us with rapidity fearful to contemplate—a rapidity only reasonably to be expected in time of war. This state of things has been produced by a prevailing unwillingness either to increase the tariff or to resort to direct taxation. But the one or the other must come. Coming expenditures must be met, and the present debt must be paid; and money can not always be borrowed for these objects. The system of loans is but temporary in its nature, and must soon explode. It is a system not only ruinous while it lasts, but one that must soon fail and leave us destitute. As an individual who undertakes to live by borrowing soon finds his original means devoured by interest, and, next, no one left to borrow from, so must it be with the Government.

"We repeat, then, that a tariff sufficient for revenue, or a direct tax, must soon be resorted to, and, indeed, we believe this alternative

is now denied by no one. But which system shall be adopted? Some of our opponents, in theory, admit the propriety of a tariff sufficient for a revenue; but even they will not in practice vote for such a tariff; while others boldly advocate direct taxation. Inasmuch, therefore, as some of them boldly advocate direct taxation, and all the rest—or so nearly all as to make exceptions needless—refuse to adopt the tariff, we think it doing them no injustice to class them all as advocates of direct taxation. Indeed, we believe they are only delaying an open avowal of the system, till they can assure themselves that the people will tolerate it. Let us then briefly compare the two systems. The tariff is the cheaper system because the duties, being collected in large parcels at a few commercial points, will require comparatively few officers in their collection; while by the direct tax system the land must be literally covered with assessors and collectors, going forth like swarms of Egyptian locusts, devouring every blade of grass and other green thing.

“By this system (the protective) the man who contents himself to live upon the products of his own country pays nothing at all. Surely our country is extensive enough and its products abundant and varied enough, to answer all the real wants of its people. In short, by the protective system the burden of revenue falls almost entirely upon the wealthy and luxurious few, while the substantial and laboring many who live at home and upon home products, go entirely free.

“By the direct tax system none can escape. However strictly the citizen may exclude from his premises all foreign luxuries—fine cloths, fine silks, rich wines, golden chains and diamond rings—still for the possession of his house, his barn, and his homespun, he is to be perpetually haunted and harassed by the tax-gatherer. With these views we leave it to be determined whether we or our opponents are the more truly democratic on the subject.”

Perhaps it was not entirely accidental that these views of Mr. Lincoln found almost literal expression in the Republican National platform of 1860. Nor is it strange that this year, as in 1860, no chart is needed to mark the Republican position upon this great economic question. The whole world knew a year in advance of its utterance what the Republican platform of 1860 would be, and the whole world knows now, and has known for a year past, what the Republican platform of 1896 will be.

Then the battle was to arrest the spread of slave labor in America; now it is to prevent the increase of illy-paid and

degraded free labor in America. The platform of 1896, I say, is already written—written in the hearts and at the homes of the masses of our countrymen. It has been thought out around hundreds of thousands of American firesides—literally wrought out, by the new conditions and harsh experiences of the past three years.

On the great questions still unsettled, or in dispute between the dominant parties, we stand now just as we did in 1860, for Republican principles are unalterable. On the subject of protection to American labor and American interests we can re-affirm, and will re-affirm, the Lincoln platform of 1860. It needs neither amendment nor elaboration. Indeed, we could begin the platform of 1896 in the exact words with which the fathers of the Republican party began the platform of 1860. Its first plank, you will remember, reads as follows:

*“Resolved, That the history of the Nation during the last four years has fully established the propriety and necessity of the organization and perpetuation of the Republican party, and that the causes which called it into existence are permanent in their nature, and now, more than ever before, demand its peaceful and constitutional triumph.”*

This was said near the close of the last Democratic Administration, which for a time controlled all branches of the National Government. With what truth it applies to the present Democratic Administration which for two years following March 4, 1893, again had control of all branches of the National Government.

Now let me read the Lincoln platform on the tariff, adopted on May 17, 1860, by the second Republican National Convention, and I submit whether it does not express the sentiment of the great majority of the people of Illinois, and of the whole country, even better to-day than it did then. Here is what it said:

*“Resolved, That while providing revenue for the support of the General Government by duties on imports, sound policy requires such an adjustment of these imports as to encourage the development of the industrial interests of the whole country; and we commend that policy of National exchanges which secures to the workingmen liberal*

wages, to agriculture remunerative prices, to mechanics and manufacturers an adequate reward for their skill, labor and enterprise, and to the Nation commercial prosperity and independence."

Better protection no Republican could ask or desire; and poorer none should advocate or accept! We are faithfully wedded to the great principle of protection by every tie of party fealty and affection, and it is dearer to us now than ever before. Not only is it dearer to us as Republicans, but it has more devoted supporters, among the great masses of the American people, irrespective of party, than at any previous period in our National history. It is everywhere recognized and endorsed as the great, masterful, triumphant, American principle—the key to our prosperity in business, the safest prop to the Treasury of the United States, and the bulwark of our National independence and financial honor.

The question of the continuance or abandonment of our protective system has been the one great, overshadowing, or vital question in American politics ever since Mr. Cleveland opened the contest in December, 1887, to which the lamented James G. Blaine made swift reply from across the sea, and it will continue the issue until a truly American policy, for the good of America, is firmly established and perpetuated. The fight will go on, and must go on, until the American system is everywhere recognized, until all nations come to understand and respect it as distinctly, and all Americans come to honor or love it as dearly, as they do the American flag. God grant the day may soon come when all partisan contention over it is forever at an end!

The Republican party is competent to carry this policy into effect. Whenever there is anything to be done for this country, it is to the Republican party we must look to have it done. We are not contending for any particular tariff law, or laws, or for any special schedules, or rates, but for the great principle—the American protective policy—the temporary overthrow of which has brought distress and ruin to every part of our beloved country.

It may be asked what the next Republican tariff law will provide. I cannot tell you. I cannot tell you what the sched-



ules and rates will be, but they will measure the difference between American and European conditions—and will, moreover, be fully adequate to protect ourselves from the invasion of our markets by Oriental products to the injury of American labor—and will in no case be too low to protect and exalt American labor, and promote and increase American production.

I can not better answer this grave inquiry than by an illustration of Mr. Lincoln's. Some one asked him, "How long a man's legs ought to be." He said: "That is a very serious question; and I have given much thought to it a great many times. Some should be longer and some shorter; but I want to tell you that a man's legs ought always to be long enough to reach from his body to the ground." And so I tell you, my inquiring free trade friend, that the legs of the next Republican tariff law will be long enough to firmly support the American body politic; sustain the public Treasury; lift up our National credit; and uphold the dignity and independence of American labor, and the enterprises and occupations of the American people.

No one need be in any doubt about what the Republican party stands for. Its own history makes that too palpable and clear to admit of doubt. It stands for a reunited and recreated Nation, based upon free and honest elections in every township, county, city, district and State in this great American Union. It stands for the American fireside, and the flag of the Nation. It stands for the American farm, the American factory and the prosperity of all the American people. It stands for a Reciprocity that reciprocates, and which does not yield up to another country a single day's labor that belongs to the American workingman. It stands for international agreements which get as much as they give, upon terms of mutual advantage. It stands for an exchange of our surplus home products for such foreign products as we consume but do not produce. It stands for the reciprocity of Elaine; for the reciprocity of Harrison; for the restoration and extension of the principle embodied in the reciprocity



provision of the Republican tariff of 1890. It stands for a foreign policy dictated by and imbued with a spirit that is genuinely American; for a policy that will revive the National traditions, and restore the National spirit which carried us proudly through the earlier years of the century. It stands for such a policy with all foreign nations as will insure both to us and them justice, impartiality, fairness, good faith, dignity and honor. It stands for the Monroe doctrine as Monroe himself proclaimed it, about which there is no division whatever among the American people. It stands now, as ever, for honest money, and a chance to earn it by honest toil. It stands for a currency of gold, silver and paper with which to measure our exchanges that shall be as sound as the Government and as untarnished as its honor. The Republican party would as soon think of lowering the flag of our country as to contemplate with patience or without protest and opposition any attempt to degrade or corrupt the medium of exchanges among our people. It can be relied upon in the future as in the past, to supply our country with the best money ever known, gold, silver, and paper, good the world over. It stands for a commercial policy that will whiten every sea with the sails of American vessels, flying the American flag, and that will protect that flag wherever it floats. It stands for a system which will give to the United States the balance of trade with every competing nation in the world. It is for a fiscal policy opposed to debts and deficiencies in time of peace, and favors the return of the Government to a debt-paying, and opposes the continuance of a debt-making policy.

And, gentlemen of the Marquette Club, let me tell you that the Republican party true to the advice and example of the immortal Lincoln, is going to make the campaign this year upon its own ground, not upon its opponent's. That is to say, the Republicans of the country are not going to help the Democratic leaders obscure the issue on which their party has been wrecked and the Administration stranded, by taking up every new incident about which a hue and cry may be raised.

On the contrary, they will not be led off by side issues, but they will everywhere courageously insist that the people in November shall judge the Administration and its party by their works and not by any new and boastful protestations by them. They will give due credit for any sporadic outburst of patriotic fervor for our rights in foreign countries that the Administration may choose to indulge in and rejoice that it is at last on the right side of a great question, which is where the Republicans have always been. But the Ship of State shall not be lured into shallow waters by false lights. No new-born zeal for American rights, or the National honor, from any quarter whatever, can raise an issue with the grand old Republican party which for forty years has steadfastly maintained it both at home and abroad. The new convert belongs to our ranks, and he is welcome, but he should remember that he cannot put patriotism at issue with the party which has been the very embodiment of patriotism from its birth to the present hour.

Gentlemen of the Marquette Club, and my fellow citizens, let us cherish the principles of our party and consecrate ourselves anew to their triumph. We have but to put our trust in the people; we have but to keep in close touch with the people; we have but to hearken to the voice of the people, as it comes to us from every quarter; we have but to paint on our banners the sentiment the people have everywhere expressed at every election during the last three years, "*Patriotism, Protection and Prosperity*"—to win another most glorious and decisive Republican National victory.

The greatest names in American history are Washington and Lincoln. One is forever associated with the independence of the States and formation of the Federal Union; the other with universal freedom and the preservation of that Union. Washington enforced the Declaration of Independence as against England; Lincoln proclaimed its fulfillment not only to a down-trodden race in America, but to all people for all time, who may seek the protection of our flag. These illustrious men achieved grander results for mankind within

a single century—from 1775 to 1865—than any other men ever accomplished in all the years since first the flight of time began. Washington engaged in no ordinary revolution. With him it was not who should rule, but what should rule. He drew his sword, not for a change of rulers upon an established throne, but to establish a new government, which should acknowledge no throne but the tribune of the people. Lincoln accepted war to save the Union, the safeguard of our liberties, and re-established it on “indestructible foundations” as forever “one and indivisible.” To quote his own grand words:

“Now we are contending that this Nation under God, shall have a new birth of freedom; and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.”

Each lived to accomplish his appointed task. Each received the unbounded gratitude of the people of his time, and each is held in great and ever-increasing reverence by posterity. The fame of each will never die. It will grow with the ages, because it is based upon imperishable service to humanity—not to the people of a single generation or country, but to the whole human family, wherever scattered, forever.

The present generation knows Washington only from history, and by that alone can judge him. Lincoln we know by history also; but thousands are still living who participated in the great events in which he was leader and master. Many of his contemporaries survived him; some are here yet in almost every locality. So Lincoln is not far removed from us. Indeed, he may be said to be still known to the millions; not surrounded by the mists of antiquity, nor by a halo of idolatry that is impenetrable.

He never was inaccessible to the people. Thousands carry with them yet the words which he spoke in their hearing; thousands remember the pressure of his hand; and I remember, as though it were but yesterday, and thousands of my comrades will recall, how, when he reviewed the Army of the Potomac immediately after the battle of Antietam,

his indescribably sad, thoughtful, far-seeing expression pierced every man's soul. Nobody could keep the people away from him, and when they came to him he would suffer no one to drive them back. So it is that an unusually large number of the American people came to know this great man, and that he is still so well remembered by them. It can not be said that they are mistaken about him, or that they misinterpreted his character and greatness.

Men are still connected with the government who served during his entire Administration. There are at least two Senators, and perhaps twice as many Representatives, who participated in his first inauguration; men who stood side by side with him in the trying duties of his Administration, and have been without interruption, in one branch or another of the public service ever since. The Supreme Court of the United States still has among its members one whom Lincoln appointed, and so of other branches of the Federal judiciary. His faithful Private Secretaries are still alive and have rendered posterity a great service in their history of Lincoln and his times. They have told the story of his life and public services with such entire frankness and fidelity, as to exhibit to the world "the very inner courts of his soul."

This host of witnesses, without exception, agree as to the true nobility and intellectual greatness of Lincoln. All proudly claim for Lincoln the highest abilities and the most distinguished and self-sacrificing patriotism. Lincoln taught them, and has taught us, that no party or partisan can escape responsibility to the people; that no party advantage, or presumed party advantage, should ever swerve us from the plain path of duty, which is ever the path of honor and distinction. He emphasized his words by his daily life and deeds. He showed to the world by his lofty example, as well as by precept and maxim that there are times when the voice of partisanship should be hushed and that of patriotism only be heeded. He taught that a good service done for the country, even in aid of an unfriendly Administration, brings to the men and the party who rise above the temptation of



temporary partisan advantage, a lasting gain in the respect and confidence of the people. He showed that such patriotic devotion is usually rewarded, not only with retention in power and the consciousness of duty well and bravely done, but with the gratification of beholding the blessings of relief and prosperity, not of a party, or section, but of the whole country. This, he held, should be the first and great consideration of all public servants.

When Lincoln died, a grateful people, moved by a common impulse, immediately placed him side by side with the immortal Washington, and unanimously proclaimed them the two greatest and best Americans. That verdict has not changed, and will not change, nor can we conceive how the historians of this or any age will ever determine what is so clearly a matter of pure personal opinion as to which of these noble men is entitled to greatest honor and homage from the people of America.

A recent writer says: "The amazing growth Lincoln made in the esteem of his countrymen and the world, while he was doing his great work, has been paralleled by the increase of his fame in the years since he died." He might have added that, like every important event of his life, Lincoln's fame rests upon a severer test than that of any other American. Never, in all the ages of men, have the acts, words, motives—even thoughts—of any statesman been so scrutinized, analyzed, studied, or speculated upon, as his. Yet from all inquirers, without distinction as to party, church, section, or country, from friend and from foe alike, comes the unanimous verdict that Abraham Lincoln must have no second place in American history, and that he will never be second to any in the reverent affections of the American people.

Says the gifted Henry Watterson, in a most beautiful, truthful, and eloquent tribute to the great Emancipator: "Born as lowly as the Son of God, reared in penury and squalor, with no gleam of light nor fair surroundings, it was reserved for this strange being, late in life, without name



or fame, or seeming preparation, to be snatched from obscurity, raised to supreme command at a supreme moment, and intrusted with the destiny of a Nation. Where did Shakespeare get his genius? Where did Mozart get his music? Whose hand smote the lyre of the Scottish plowman and staid the life of the German priest? God alone, and as surely as these were raised by God, inspired of God was Abraham Lincoln; and a thousand years hence no story, no tragedy, no epic poem, will be filled with greater wonder than that which tells of his life and death. If Lincoln was not inspired of God, then there is no such thing on earth as special providence or the interposition of divine power in the affairs of men."

My fellow citizens, a noble manhood, nobly consecrated to man, never dies. The Martyr to Liberty, the Emancipator of a Race, the Savior of the only free Government among men, may be buried from human sight, but his deeds will live in human gratitude forever.

"Great captains, with their guns and drums,  
Disturb our judgment for the hour,  
But at last silence comes;  
These are all gone, and, standing like a tower,  
Our children shall behold his fame;  
The kindly-earnest, brave, far-seeing man,  
Sagacious, patient, dreading praise, not blame,  
New birth of our new soil, the first American."





